IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A hinge device for openably and closably connecting one member and another member, the device comprising:

a base member fixed to the one member;

a movable shaft rotatably supported by the base member, said movable shaft being fixed to the another member;

a leaf spring member having a curved portion, said leaf spring member being non-rotatably but axially movably inserted onto the movable shaft; and

a fixing plate inserted onto the movable shaft such that the fixing plate is axially movable and does not rotate when the movable shaft rotates, the fixing plate having at least two protrusions located on a surface thereof, said at least two protrusions being in contact with the leaf spring member, wherein said leaf spring member and the fixing plate are pressed into contact with each other for relative rotation therebetween.

2. (Currently Amended) A hinge device for openably and closably connecting one member and another member, the device comprising:

a base member fixed to the one member;

a movable shaft rotatably supported by the base member, said movable shaft being fixed to the another member;

a leaf spring member having a curved portion, said leaf spring member being inserted onto the movable shaft such that the leaf spring member is axially movable; and

a fixing plate non-rotatably inserted onto the movable shaft such that said fixing plate is axially movably inserted on said movable shaft, the fixing plate having at least two protrusions located on a surface thereof, said at least two protusions being in contact with the leaf spring member, said fixing plate being pressed into contact with said leaf spring member such that said leaf spring member rotates relative to said fixing plate.

3. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 1, wherein the base member is a bottomed hollow cylindrical case, and the movable shaft is rotatably supported by the case, said case receiving said leaf spring member and said fixing plate such that said leaf spring member and said fixing plate are located within the case.

4. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 1, wherein the base member is a hollow cylindrical case that is open at both ends, and the movable shaft extending through the case, said case receiving said leaf spring member and said fixing plate such that said leaf spring member and said fixing plate are located within the case.

5. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 1, wherein one of the leaf spring member and the fixing plate is provided with a protrusion and the other is provided with a recess, hole, or cutout for receiving the protrusion, and a clicking sensation is produced when the protrusion provided in the one of the leaf spring member and the fixing plate fits in the recess, hole, or cutout provided in the other as the leaf spring member and the fixing plate

relatively rotate while in press contact with each other.

6. (Previously Presented) A hinge device for openably and closably connecting one member and another member, the device comprising:

a bracket fixed to the one member;

a movable shaft rotatably supported by the bracket, said movable shaft being fixed to the another member; and

a leaf spring member having a curved portion, said leaf spring member being non-rotatably inserted onto the movable shaft such that said leaf spring is inserted onto the movable shaft in an axial direction of the shaft, said bracket having a surface defining at least two protrusions, said at least two protrusions being in contact with the leaf spring member, said leaf spring member and said bracket being pressed into contact with each other for relative rotation therebetween.

7. (Currently Amended) A hinge device according to claim 6, wherein one of the leaf spring member and the bracket has a protrusion and the other has a recess, hole, or cutout for receiving the protrusion, and a clicking sensation is produced when the protrusion of the one of the leaf spring member and the bracket fits in the recess, hole, or cutout of the other as the leaf spring member and the bracket relatively rotate while in press contact with each other.

8. (Previously Presented) A hinge device for openably and closably connecting one

member and another member, the device comprising:

a movable shaft;

a first bracket non-rotatably and fixedly installed on the movable shaft and fixed to the one member;

a second bracket rotatably and axially movably inserted onto the movable shaft, said second bracket being fixed to the another member;

a fixing plate secured onto the second bracket, said fixing plate having an opening, said movable shaft being inserted through said opening of the fixing plate; and

a leaf spring member having a curved portion, said leaf spring member being inserted onto the movable shaft such that said leaf spring is axially movable, wherein at least two protrusions are defined by a contact surface of one of the fixing plate and the leaf spring member, said fixing plate and said leaf spring member being pressed into contact with each other such that said leaf spring member rotates relative to said fixing plate.

9. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 8, wherein one of the leaf spring member and the fixing plate has a protrusion and the other has a recess, hole, or cutout for receiving the protrusion, and a clicking sensation is produced when the protrusion of one of the leaf spring member and the fixing plate fits in the recess, hole, or cutout provided in the other as the leaf spring member and the fixing plate relatively rotate while in press contact with each other.

10. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 8, wherein:

the movable shaft has a flange portion located at a midway position thereof;

a friction plate is non-rotatably inserted onto the movable shaft such that said friction plate is axially movable, said friction plate being in contact with the flange portion of the movable shaft;

a reinforcing plate is secured, while being inserted onto the movable shaft, onto a side surface of the second bracket which is opposite to a side surface onto which the fixing plate is secured; and

the friction plate and the reinforcing plate are pressed into contact with each other for relative rotation therebetween.

11. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 1, wherein a reinforcing leaf spring member is laminated on the leaf spring member.

12. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 11, wherein the leaf spring member and the reinforcing leaf spring member laminated on each other differ in spring force.

13. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 11, wherein the leaf spring member and the reinforcing leaf spring member laminated on each other differ in deflection amount.

14. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 1, wherein the protrusion is in a form of a ball.

15. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 1, further comprising:

a nut; and

a washer, said movable shaft having a threaded portion, said threaded portion of said movable shaft receiving said nut such that said nut contacts said washer, said nut and said washer pressing said fixing plate into contact with said leaf spring member.

16. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 2, further comprising:

a nut; and

a washer, said movable shaft having a threaded portion, said threaded portion of said movable shaft receiving said nut such that said nut contacts said washer, said nut and said washer pressing said fixing plate into contact with said leaf spring member.

17. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 6, further comprising:

a nut; and

a washer, said movable shaft having a threaded portion, said threaded portion of said movable shaft receiving said nut such that said nut contacts said washer, said nut and said washer pressing said fixing plate into contact with said leaf spring member.

18. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 8, further comprising:

a nut; and

a washer, said movable shaft having a threaded portion, said threaded portion of said movable shaft receiving said nut such that said nut contacts said washer, said nut and said washer pressing said fixing plate into contact with said leaf spring member.

19. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 3, further comprising:

a nut; and

a washer, said movable shaft having a threaded portion, said threaded portion of said movable shaft receiving said nut such that said nut contacts said washer, said nut and said washer pressing said fixing plate into contact with said leaf spring member, said threaded portion, said washer and said nut being located in said case.

20. (Previously Presented) A hinge device according to claim 4, further comprising:

a nut; and

a washer, said movable shaft having a threaded portion, said threaded portion of said movable shaft receiving said nut such that said nut contacts said washer, said nut and said washer pressing said fixing plate into contact with said leaf spring member.